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"Since Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast nearly two years ago, Rep. Charlie Melancon has worked tirelessly to locate and obtain the federal resources necessary to rebuild the region," said Rep. Mike Ross (D-AR), Blue Dog Co-Chair for Communications. "Rep. Melancon understands the importance of prioritizing taxpayer dollars in a way that is fiscally responsible for the American people, and as a member of the Blue Dog Coalition, he will continue to be a leader in the fight on behalf of the people of southern Louisiana."

"For too long, our government has been putting wants ahead of needs when budgeting, and Hurricanes Katrina and Rita showed us the devastating consequences of this fiscal irresponsibility," said Rep. Melancon. "For decades, south Louisiana needed a strong levee system that would protect our citizens and industries from deadly hurricanes and storm surges. We needed coastal restoration projects to preserve what's left of our disappearing wetlands, and provide a natural buffer from storms coming off the Gulf. Instead, these needs were put on a back burner and ignored, even as the national debt soared to historic levels. As a Blue Dog, I am committed to balancing our nation's checkbook and paying down the debt, so we can take care of needs like hurricane protection and coastal restoration."

Due to the efforts of Rep. Melancon and his Blue Dog colleagues, the House rules package for the 110th Congress was passed in the first 24 hours of the new session and includes key principles of the Coalition's 12-point plan to end the nation's addiction to deficit spending. Specifically, the package requires pay-as-you-go budget discipline, known as "PAYGO," with no new deficit spending. This rule, which was in place when the nation had its first balanced budget in nearly 30 years from 1998 to 2001, has been extended to the Senate with the recent passage of the Fiscal Year 2008 Budget Resolution.

The fiscally conservative Democratic Blue Dog Coalition was formed in 1995 with the goal of representing the center of the House of Representatives and appealing to the mainstream values of the American public. The Blue Dogs are dedicated to a core set of beliefs that transcend partisan politics, including a deep commitment to the financial stability and national security of the United States. Currently there are 43 members of the Blue Dog Coalition.

Rep. Melancon is currently featured on the Blue Dog Coalition website, located at <http://www.house.gov/ross/BlueDogs/>

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